REMARKS

Claims 1-11, 13-31, and 33 are now pending. Applicants have amended claims 1, 9-10, 13, 21, and 30 and canceled claims 12 and 32.

The Examiner has objected to the abstract citing MPEP § 608.01(b) as lacking proper language and format because it uses the term "may." Applicants respectfully request clarification. Applicants can find nothing in this section or any other section of the MPEP that indicates that the term "may" is impermissible within an abstract.

The Examiner has objected to claims 9 and 21 based on typographical errors. Applicants have amended claims 9 and 21 to address the Examiner's concern.

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-11, 12-31, and 33 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, the second paragraph, as being indefinite. The Examiner believes that the phrase "'detecting an error during the transmission' . . . fails to clearly define the specific time and location of error detection." Applicants respectfully disagree. Applicants have, however, amended claim 1 to explicitly state that the detecting is performed by a "switch." Since the preamble of claim 10 recites a "method in a switch" and the preamble of claim 30 recites a "switch comprising," applicants respectfully submit that it is clear that the detecting is performed by a switch. Similarly, the preamble of claim 21 recites a "communications device comprising," which makes it clear that the detecting is performed by the communications device.

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-11, 13-31, and 33 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Haartsen. Applicants respectfully disagree.

The claims are directed to detecting that an error has occurred during the transmission of data and transmitting an error message to the "initiator communications device," rather than the transmitting communications device that actually transmitted the data. For example, a client computer may send to a storage device a request for the storage device to send data to the client computer. When a switch (or other communications device) detects that an error has occurred in the transmission of the data from the storage device to the client computer, that switch sends an error message

to the client computer (i.e., the initiator device), rather than to the storage device (i.e., the transmitting device). The client computer can then decide how to handle the error. As a result, storage devices and switches (in a switching network between client computers and the storage devices) do not need the complex logic required to handle error messages. Rather, only initiator communications devices, such as client computers, need this complex logic. Thus, the overall cost of the storage devices and switches can be significantly reduced.

According to claims 1-9, an initiator communications device sends a transaction request and a responding communications device sends a transaction response. Upon detecting an error during the transmission of the transaction response, a switch transmits "an error message to the initiator communications device." So, claim 1 make it clear that, rather than transmitting the error message to the responding communications device that originated the transaction response, the switch transmits the error message to the intended destination of the transaction response—the initiator communications device.

Claims 10-11, 13-31, and 33 make it clear that when an error is detected in the transmitting of data, an error message is transmitted to the communications device that initiated the transmission of the data, rather than the communications device that actually transmitted the data. For example, claim 21 recites transmitting "an error message to the identified communications device [that initiated the transmission of the data] rather than reporting the error to the transmitting communications device [that transmitted the data].

Haartsen discloses conventional automatic repeat query ("ARQ") and negative acknowledgement ("NACK") methods. With an ARQ method, a source automatically repeats a transmission of a packet when the destination does not acknowledge that a packet has been received by sending an acknowledgement ("ACK") message. So, by itself an ARQ method does not specify that an error message is transmitted; rather it relies on not receiving an ACK message to detect an error. A NACK method can be used with or without an ARQ method. In either case, when a destination detects an error in a packet, the NACK method sends a NACK message only to the source that

transmitted the packet. It does not send an error message to the destination of the packet.

The claims recite, in contrast, that an error message is sent to the initiator device, rather than the transmitting device. In the example of the client computer and storage device discussed above, Haartsen's NACK method would send the error message to the storage device when an error is detected in the response sent from the storage device to the client computer. With the claimed invention, the error message is sent to the client computer, rather than to the storage device.

Based upon the above remarks and amendments, applicants respectfully request reconsideration of this application and its early allowance. If the Examiner has any questions or believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is encouraged to call the undersigned at (206) 359-8548.

Respectfully submitted,
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